

Week 14 | Joel 2:15-17 “Shut It Down”

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Last week, the book of Joel took a radical shift away from locust invasions (**Joel 1**), and a looming military occupation against the nation of Israel (**Joel 2:1-11**), to God’s call for His people to return to Him, with all their hearts (**Joel 2:12; Revelation 2:1-7**).
- B. The strength of Joel’s appeal was rooted in the nature of God (**Joel 2:13a**) and that He does relent from doing harm (**Joel 2:13b**), but at this moment, they didn’t know if God would relent (**Joel 2:14**). The nation of Israel was in the balance, and the jury was out regarding what God would do.
- C. We also talked about our present season in American history isn’t a causal moment, or a normal moment, but a time where God’s family should be awake, paying attention, and responding to God, because the intended outcome isn’t sure, or fixed.
- D. But as we will look at today, God’s call for Israel to return to Him (**Joel 2:12-14**), is now followed up with clear, specific instructions to bring about God’s intended outcome; mercy for His family, and His glory restored among the nations, through Israel (**Joel 2:15-17; Malachi 1:11**).
- E. God’s calling His family to return to Him, but He’s not going to leave it to the inventiveness of man. God Himself, in great detail, has lined out exactly what must happen to enact mercy from heaven.

II. GOD’S CALL FOR HIS FAMILY TO GATHER BEFORE HIM (JOEL 2:15-17)

- 1. **Joel 2:15-17** *“Blow the trumpet in Zion, consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly; gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children and nursing babes; let the bridegroom go out from his chamber, and the bride from her dressing room. Let the priests, who minister to the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar; let them say, spare Your people, O Lord, and do not give your heritage to reproach, that the nations should rule over them. Why should they say among the people’s, where is their God?”*
- B. What Joel gives us in these verses is around 9 imperatives that must happen if God is going to extend mercy to His family in their present, and future looming crisis;
 - 1. (1)Blow the trumpet (2) Consecrate a fast (3)Call a scared assembly (4)Gather the people (5)Sanctify the congregation (6)Assemble the elders (7)Gather the children and nursing babes (8)(Let the priests) Weep before the porch and the altar (9)(Let the priests say) Spare Your people O Lord
- C. It’s as if God is shouting through these imperatives, *“Don’t dress for war. Don’t do what you think is a wise response to Me. Don’t dig in your heels. Don’t become proud. Don’t exalt yourselves. Have no confidence in your ability to fight, based on your previous history of wining wars, and taking cities. Instead, stop everything! Cancel everything! Shut down business as usual! Waste no time. Do it now!”*
- D. Blow The Trumpet In Zion—The first call to blow the trumpet was God’s warning that an invading army was looming (**Joel 2:1-2**), but this trumpet blast was to gather the spiritual family before the Lord. In light of the graciousness of God’s heart, the kindness of God, and the mercy of God, the prophet was calling them to assemble before Him.

- E. Consecrate A Fast—Just as the locust invasion issued a call for fasting (**Joel 1:14**), so also does this new threat of an invading army require a fast as their response.
1. Our tendency is to cover up our weakness with lots of things. Fasting, works to expose those things that we're using prop up our flesh. We often work overtime covering up our weaknesses, when God is working overtime to expose them, so that He can give us His power as a sufficient replacement (**2nd Cor. 12:7-10**)
 2. Fasting doesn't earn us anything from God, it simply puts us in a greater place to experience the grace that's already been given to us.
- F. Call A Sacred Assembly—In boiled down form, this is a prayer meeting where the leaders, and the people gather together on the same level playing field, to repent, worship, and ask God for mercy.
1. This is not just any type of gathering, it's a SACRED assembly, a time set apart for God. One dictionary defines sacred as, *"something dedicated to God for religious purposes, or, something a person holds to be important because it has a transformative effect on their life and destiny."*
- G. Gather The People, Sanctify The Congregation, The Elders, Children, Nursing Babes—Because nobody would be exempt from the looming invasion of the northern army, nobody was exempt from crying out to the Lord.
1. For Israel, instead of having the elements of the temple before them, it was bare. Instead of joy and celebration, it was dreary, and instead of peoples fashioned in white priestly garments, they were girded about with sackcloth. It wasn't that a few people among them were responsible. The whole nation was guilty.
 2. Their crisis, and our current crisis requires EVERYONE to stop what we're doing and respond to the Lord in solemn assemblies, and gatherings that express Godly sorrow, as we worship the Lord and ask Him for mercy.
 3. Typically nursing mom were exempt from these types of religious gatherings, but here, they are called to come, regardless of their exemption (**1st Samuel. 1:21-24**).
- H. Let The Bridegroom Go Out From His Chamber, And The Bride From Her Dressing Room—The national crisis is serious enough that the newlyweds marriage isn't to be consummated yet. These words in the Hebrew, chamber and dressing room, both speak of the same thing; the bedroom. Room and chamber are virtually synonyms for the nuptial tent where the marriage was consummated (**2nd Samuel 16:22**).
1. Exemption, which was given to newlyweds, for an entire year, removing them from business dealing and even military service is suspended so that they gather together before God, along with the congregation (**Deuteronomy 20:7; 24:5**).
 2. God's call for repentance can't be left to the individual, it has to take place among the corporate body, the family, the whole of the ministry.
 3. The call has gone out; have you heard it? And if you've heard it, are you responding?
 4. I know it's disruptive, but the Churches response has to be commensurate with the threat, or the crisis, either present or future. Is your present response in proportion with our current crisis?

- a. My fear is that because many of our brothers and sisters see COVID-19 as a hoax, and our historical/present day sin against minorities as a farce, that it hinders a proper response. How can you respond to a crisis that you don't think is a crisis?
- I. Let The Priests Who Minister To The Lord, Weep Between The Porch And The Altar—The priests were to stand in the position of a mediator, between the brazen altar of the people, and the holy place where those sacrifices were offered to God.
 1. But the glory of the New Covenant is that we have a Great High, we have an Eternal Priest, a better Aaron, who has once and for all, offered Himself as an acceptable sacrifice, thereby empowering every follower of Jesus to offer prayers on behalf of others (**Hebrews 9:6-28**).
 2. Because of Christ's sacrificial death, He's made a way for an entire people (the body of Christ) to become priestly, to make intercession on behalf of both God's family, and the nations. Intercession is the glory of every Christ follower.
 - J. Let Them Say (the Priests), Spare Your People O Lord, And Do Not Give Your Heritage To Reproach, That The Nations Should Rule Over Them—Their prayer isn't, "God, don't let these locust rule over us" but rather, "don't let these ungodly nations, these Gentile nations rule over us."
 1. This verse is evidence that Joel's labor among them had taken root. Joel's initial call for their aged among them, the inhabitants, the drunkards, the priests and the farmers to wake up, has given way to an awakened people.
 2. God's judgment of locust, and His sure word of a future military invasion has grabbed the attention of His family. They experienced the judgments of God firsthand, and their once distant, disconnected response to Him, has fully turned.
 3. They are praying, not for their just due, not what belongs to them, but for God to have mercy.
 - K. Why Should They Say Among The People's, Where Is Their God? —But their prayer for mercy, has turned into a prayer that God would be glorified among them, and throughout the nations of the earth.
 1. Jonathan Edwards rightly said, "The end to which God created the world, is for His glory." All things exist for the glory of God, to be seen, experienced and the supreme thing for which every living creature desires!
 2. God's family has moved from dissidence, from separation, from wandering, to proximity with God, and prayers that have even shifted from just mercy, to God's glory being seen!
 - L. I get that this feels weak to us; but that's because it is. I get that this feels like a shallow or fruitless response to our current crisis. I get that this doesn't feel as satisfying as freely sharing your opinions, debating online, and pouring forth your complaints among your fellow co-workers and like-minded friends.
 - M. But that's the concern I have. We feel far more justified, edified, and relieved by finally getting those things out of us, then we do gathering before the God of glory and looking to Him, listening to Him, hearing from Him, and doing what He's asked us to do. Beloved, are we living to preserve our way of life, or for God's glory to be seen among the nations?